

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

Polehampton Voluntary Controlled Church of England Junior School

Kibblewhite Crescent,
Twyford,
Berkshire,
RG10 9AX

Diocese of Oxford

Local Authority: Wokingham, Berkshire

Dates of inspection: 18.03.08

Date of last inspection: N/A

School's Unique reference number: 109981

Name of Headteacher: Mrs. Paula Montie

Inspector's name and NS inspector's number: Mrs. Jenny Earp, 288

Context

Polehampton CE Junior School is a 2 – form entry school with 185 pupils on roll from Year 3 through to Year 6. The school became a Voluntary Controlled Church of England School in 2004 and since this time, the school has moved forward at an accelerated pace. The relatively new church school status has given the school a greater sense of shared identity and a commitment to Christian values.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Polehampton Church of England Junior School as a Church of England school are good

The ethos of the school is overtly Christian and pupils are very well nurtured and valued. The school correctly judges that the partnership between church, school and the local community is good. The pro-active relationships between the staff, leadership team, parents and clergy create an inclusive, happy environment. The school has strong links with Polehampton Church of England Infant School.

Established strengths

- Strong leadership and management which sets a clear vision for the school, rooted in Christian values
- The school's honest and extensive self-evaluation, which correctly identifies strengths and areas for development
- The school's commitment to inclusion and its imaginative approach to learning

Focus for development

- Explore opportunities for prayer in the life of the school
- Promote pupils' spiritual awareness and development

The school through its distinctive Christian character is good at meeting the needs of all learners

Polehampton is a good school which provides for the needs of its pupils very well. The vision of the headteacher for an inclusive school ensures that all pupils feel safe, valued and supported, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Pupils enjoy being in school and speak positively about their learning. Some children speaking at the time of the inspection were particularly excited about a recent visit to a Hindu Temple: 'It was amazing that they could carve so beautifully and it was a wonderful sight when we first arrived'. The school's Christian values have a positive impact on pupils' perceptions of themselves and their potential. The extent to which pupils feel valued and special is excellent. They say; 'We sing, learn, have fun, pray and celebrate'. The Governing Body Curriculum Statement expresses the intention that pupils at Polehampton will experience what it is to live in a community that celebrates the Christian faith and that they are concerned with the development of the whole person as a child of God. This is evidenced by some of the pupils' comments: 'God helps us to solve problems by guiding you'; 'He made us so he knows how to help you'. The school has a deep commitment to developing and affirming pupils' self-esteem, using a solution-focussed approach, which encourages them to take responsibility for

their own behaviour, which was witnessed during the inspection. The school uses its Christian character to nourish, encourage and challenge the social, moral and cultural development of learners. A priority now is to highlight and deepen pupils' understanding of spiritual development, for instance by being a little braver in the exploration of fundamental questions, as highlighted in the SIAS toolkit. Religious Education is well taught overall with an example of excellent practice in Year 6. The school judges that teacher knowledge and skill in teaching RE has improved greatly since becoming a church school, but that there is still work to do in this area.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good

Collective Worship at Polehampton holds a central place in the life of the school. This is demonstrated by the active participation of staff as worshippers. As a consequence pupils behave well, participate willingly and speak positively about the experience. During the inspection the children sang an Easter song joyfully. One child said; 'I like the things we talk about and the songs we sing in assembly; the whole school gets involved'. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations that they will value and respect each other and other people's beliefs and cultures. Parents value opportunities to be involved in worship. They appreciate the strong sense of belonging created in the school and the welcome extended to them encourages them to attend Christian Assemblies. The school successfully uses worship to celebrate important events in the life of the school and often involves the church. For instance, Bishop Steven was invited to celebrate the first anniversary of becoming a Church School. The school joins with Polehampton Infant School for worship during the year at events such as 'Peace Assembly', 'Thank you Assembly for the community' and Mothering Sunday. The involvement of the local vicars makes a significant contribution to the impact of worship in the school. Staff feel they have benefited from these 'engaging, motivating, worship leaders', who provide ideas and advise on how to develop and improve practice. Pupils are familiar with the Lord's Prayer, which is said during Collective Worship, but prayer is not evident at other times during the school day. Informal procedures for monitoring and evaluating Collective Worship are in place. However these provide only limited information about the impact of worship on the school community.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The headteacher and governors articulate the vision of the school extremely well and have been effective in promoting the quality and core status of the school's distinctive Christian character. The school's leaders have effective monitoring and evaluation processes in place for its self-evaluation as a church school. These are linked well to school improvement planning and take account of the views of staff and learners. The school's self-evaluation documentation shows a willingness to be honest and self-critical in the drive to improve the school further. All stakeholders have worked very positively to develop visual images of the school's new Church foundation. A beautiful stained glass display in the entrance hall, together with other signs and symbols around the school, clearly celebrate the school's new status. The school community has received regular training opportunities as part of the ongoing improvement of the school as a church school. Staff receive support and a good level of challenge from the school's leaders through their bi-annual 'Governor Days' and excellent collaborative team-work. Learners and other stakeholders speak positively of the way in which the school seeks and values their views. The school has a clear and strategic view about church school improvement, based on evidence drawn from school self-evaluation. The school has productive and supportive links with the local church community. The vicar visits school regularly to lead worship and to spend time with staff and children. His presence is an important church/school link and pupils respond accordingly, showing they are happy and comfortable in the church environment. The positive, inclusive and caring school community is a good example of the church school ethos at Polehampton. One parent said that the school 'always felt like a church school and now this has been formalised'. This is a reflection of the good leadership and management.